



International Federation of University Women triennial conference rings alarm bells: Delegates in Istanbul declare the advance of women has stalled in many countries

Istanbul, Turkey, 29 August 2013 — Conclusions from the triennial conference of the [International Federation of University Women](#) (IFUW), where some four hundred women from 53 countries gathered in Istanbul, Turkey, stated that the advance of women has stalled in many countries and called for further integrated policy and legislation in favour of secondary and higher education and the implementation of women's human rights.

The conference was organised by the [Turkish Association of University Women](#) (TAUW) and IFUW around the theme of Women's role in achieving a sustainable future: Education, urbanisation, violence and human rights. High level speakers such as Şafak Pavey, Minister of Parliament in Turkey and International Woman of Courage Award recipient, Saniye Gulser Corat, Director of the Division for Gender Equality in the Office of the Director-General at UNESCO, Professor Yakin Erturk, member of the Council of Europe, Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), and Dr Sima Samar from Afghanistan were all present, as were many other respected women leaders. The general agreement was that a right that can not be exercised is not a right.

As Ms Pavey stated in her keynote speech, “a society can only be civilised if it provides its women and girls equal participation. I believe that our journey should steer more towards educational campaigns to clean cultural prejudices and introduce transparent accountable governance. The developments on women's fundamental rights and freedoms are buried in the “deep culture”. I believe our only path to overcome this obstacle is through reconciling freedoms and traditions.”

The conference participants recommend that secondary, higher, and lifelong education and women's rights be considered as indispensable in order to improve girls' and women's socio-economic, cultural and health status, thereby in turn improving the status of their children and families.

IFUW has therefore resolved that early and forced marriage is a form of human and children's rights violation, and children should be protected from incest, forced marriage and children's rights violations, and be entitled to violence-free family life. Women should be protected against violence, trafficking and exploitation, and all girls and women should have the right to safe access to education.

The International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)) is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and has an international membership. Founded in 1919, IFUW is the leading girls' and women's global organization run by and for women, advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels.

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